better part of an hour, and when I was allowed to put on my clothes again, my body was full of large, red, marks from the sucking. The two worthies entertained me during the whole doctoring process with a lively conversation which I did not understand. From the pantomimic show I could, however, gather that it was a consultation. For a fee I gave one of the physicians a shirt and the other a pair of tight-fitting drawers.»[1]

As mentioned before, in case of illness the Choroti try to back up the work of the medicine man by dancing; such dancing is then regarded as magically counteracting the influence of the spirit of the illness.[2] The spirit of the illness is by the Choroti called »mohsek ihitek», i. e., the arrow-shooting spirit, which, as I have pointed out in the foregoing, signifies that the Indians believe that the »mohsek» in question has the power of causing illness by arrow-shot. The belief that illnesses could be caused by »fairy-darts» is met with among a number of different peoples, and, as we know, was formerly common also in Sweden.

The Choroti also try to cure themselves of illnesses by internally taking medicines consisting of decoctions of herbs, etc. It is, nevertheless, possible that the Indians themselves regard these, which we consider natural, remedies as being magical.

When an epidemic disease causes many deaths in a Choroti village, it is the practice of the Indians to burn the huts and remove to another site. This they do, either from fear of the spirits of the dead,[3] or in order to dodge the attack of the spirit of the disease.[4]

On the death of her husband, a Choroti widow cuts off her hair and burns it, and paints her face black with soot. We may take it that these signs of mourning also are of magical import. As an instance of this, the Choroti say that widows cut off their hair so that it shall not be a means of their husbands' spirits molesting them.[5]

One evening when after a long day's shooting I arrived at the Choroti village situated near our camp at Tatarenda, I was met by the sound of monotonous singing, muffled drumming, and the noise of magic rattles.

[1] Nordenskiöld (13), pp. 95 and 96.
[2] Karsten (1), p. 14.
[3] Karsten (2), p. 30.
[4] Cf. Karsten (1), pp. 32 and 33.
[5] »When I asked the Chorotis why a widow cuts and destroys her hair, I received the answer that the dead husband, who wants his wife to follow him to the grave, is believed to attack her through the hair; in order to rid herself of this danger she shaves it off.» Karsten (4), p. 62.

1: Rosen E-5 (1901-1902) 1924 SK6 Choroti SK6

Of all this there was a cessation as soon as I had approached the village near enough for the dogs to give warning, by barking, that a stranger was coming. In answer to my question why there had been singing, drumming and shaking rattles, I was told that there had been a dance for somebody who had died in the village. From what the Indians represented to me I gathered that the dancing, the singing, and the »music» had been performed in order to protect the soul of the dead person from being attacked by evil spirits, but it is possible that, instead of this, the dancers were aiming at protecting the villagers from being harmed by the spirit of the deceased, or from the evil spirit who had killed the newly dead person. The latter explanation is more in correspondence with other observations of the customs of the Choroti Indians.

In the literature one finds a statement that the Choroti bury their dead in a lying-down position.[1] This mode of burying does occur among the Choroti, but these Indians also inter their departed ones in a hunched up, squatting position.[2] As an instance, the Choroti who were living near Tatarenda declared that they usually buried their dead in the last-mentioned position. This mode of burial may possibly be connected with cultural influence from the neighbouring Chiriguano, but in such a case that influence must have been active also among the Choroti living right away on the Pilcomayo, for all the Choroti skeletons (three) that Nordenskiöld excavated in the neighbourhood of Fort Crevaux had been buried in a sitting posture. Of the three Choroti skeletons unearthed by him at Caiza in the Tatarenda district, one was found »in a doubled-up posture, with one hand on the top of the head and the other placed on the chest».[3]

During our journey Nordenskiöld only excavated these six Choroti skeletons. He has kindly permitted me to publish his notes on the circumstances under which the skeletons were found. The data above referred to I have taken from the catalogue supplied by Nordenskiöld to the Ethnographical Section of the Riksmuseum, in which his original notes upon modes of burial are embodied (see preceding foot-note).

Even in my earliest published account of the Choroti Indians I made

[1] Karsten (3), p. 304.

[2] von Rosen (3), p. 13.

[3] This according to Nordenskiöld's original notes in the Riksmuseum inventory, 03. 5. Whether the skeletons excavated at Caiza were found in a sitting or lying-down position is not expressly stated in the notes. But as regards the Choroti skeletons excavated at Crevaux, Nordenskiöld especially points out that they had been buried in a »sitting posture».